

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

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SUBJECT: HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON ROMANIAN WAIVER
EXTENSION, SEPTEMBER 14

REF: STATE 224876

1. SUMMARY: WITH HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON ROMANIAN
WAIVER EXTENSION CONCLUDED SEPTEMBER 14, ROMANIAN MFN
APPEARS TO HAVE CLEARED ALL OBSTACLES FOR ANOTHER YEAR.
NEITHER HOUSE NOR SENATE COMMITTEES HAVE YET DECIDED
WHETHER TO PUT THEIR VIEWS ON WAIVER EXTENSION IN PRINT
OR SIMPLY TO ACQUIESCE IN AUTOMATIC EXTENSION OCTOBER 15.
END SUMMARY.

2. TRADE SUBCOMMITTEE OF HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS HELD
HEARINGS SEPTEMBER 14 ON ROMANIAN WAIVER EXTENSION, WITH
ABNER MIKVA OF ILLINOIS IN THE CHAIR. ADMINISTRATION WAS
REPRESENTED BY PANEL CONSISTING OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY
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HARTMAN, WHO PRESENTED ORAL STATEMENT; AMBASSADOR BARNES;

STROH OF COMMERCE; VASTINE OF TREASURY; AND FEKETEKUTY OF STR. SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS CONABLE, DUNCAN, FRENZEL AND GIBBONS WERE ON HAND FOR MUCH OF TESTIMONY.

3. SCENARIO OF HEARINGS WAS SIMILAR TO THAT EMPLOYED FOR

SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING SEPTEMBER 8. WITNESSES WERE HELD TO SHORT TIME LIMITS, QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS WAS NOT OVERLY PROBING, AND PUBLIC WITNESSES REPRESENTING HUNGARIAN MINORITY INTERESTS WERE SCHEDULED AT END OF SESSION.

4. USEFUL SUPPORT FOR WAIVER EXTENSION CAME FROM CONGRESSMEN VANIK, FINDLEY AND BINGHAM, WHO APPEARED AS WITNESSES. VANIK CALLED FOR EXTENSION, SAYING "ROMANIA DESERVES MORE TIME TO DEMONSTRATE ITS COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS." FINDLEY STRONGLY SUPPORTED EXTENSION, POINTING OUT MFN IS NOT A FAVOR AND SAYING HE HAS RECEIVED GOOD COOPERATION FROM GOR IN SOLVING HUMANITARIAN AND EMIGRATION CASES WHICH HE HAS RAISED. BINGHAM'S SUPPORT WAS SOMEWHAT MORE CONDITIONAL, ALTHOUGH HE DID SAY THAT DENIAL OF MFN "WOULD MAKE NO CONTRIBUTION WHATSOEVER" TO THE SOLUTION OF EMIGRATION AND HUMANITARIA PROBLEMS. BINGHAM ASKED FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION TO TWO CATEGORIES: MARRIAGE APPROVALS, WHICH HE SAID ARE NOW SUBJECT TO "CRUEL DELAYS AND DENIALS"; AND EMIGRATION REQUESTS OF FAMILIES OF EMIGRANTS WHO LEFT ROMANIA ILLEGALLY. ALSO APPEARING AS WITNESSES WERE CONGRESSMEN DRINAN AND MCDONALD, WHO FOLLOWED SAME LINE AS AT SEPTEMBER 8 HEARING (REFTEL).

5. AMONG WITNESSES SUPPORTING WAIVER EXTENSION WERE MILTON ROSENTHAL, WHO GAVE EFFECTIVE OFF-THE-CUFF DEFENSE OF ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL BENEFITS OF TRADE AGREEMENT; FORMER AMBASSADOR WILLIAM CRAWFORD; MAX BERRY OF EAST-WEST TRADE COUNCIL; FORMER FSO (NOW TRADE CONSULTANT) FREDERICK DRUM HUNT; AND A.S. LUCACIU AND GEORGE CRISAN, REPRESENTING ROMANIAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF THE U.S. AND CANADA. OF THOSE FEW WITNESSES OPPOSED TO WAIVER EXTENSION, MOST EMPHATIC WERE TWO OF MAGYAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXTRACTION: LASZLO HAMOS (CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ROMANIA) AND SZABOLCS MESTERHAZY. A REPRESENTATIVE OF STONE, GLASS AND CLAY WORKERS UNION ALSO TESTIFIED AGAINST MFN FOR ROMANIA BUT MADE LITTLE HEADWAY AGAINST SHARP CROSS-EXAMINATION BY GIBBONS AND MIKVA.

6. SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY MIKVA AND CONABLE,

WERE CONCERNED BY WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS UNEVENNESS OR "CYCLICAL NATURE" OF ROMANIAN EMIGRATION FIGURES. BOTH HARTMAN AND BARNES SPOKE TO THIS POINT, WITH HARTMAN URGING SUBCOMMITTEE TO FOCUS ON ROMANIA'S PERFORMANCE OVER THE LONG TERM AND BARNES POINTING TO VARIETY OF FACTORS THAT CAUSE APPLICATIONS AND APPROVALS TO HIT

RELATIVE PEAKS AT DIFFERENT SEASONS OF YEAR. EMIGRATION TO ISRAEL RECEIVED SOMEWHAT LESS ATTENTION THAN DURING SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING.

7. AT THIS POINT, WAIVER EXTENSION FOR ANOTHER YEAR SEEMS ASSURED. NOT YET DECIDED, HOWEVER, IS WHETHER HOUSE OR SENATE COMMITTEES WILL TAKE ANY POSITIVE STEP ENDORSING WAIVER, FOR EXAMPLE BY PREFACING THE PUBLISHED HEARING TRANSCRIPTS WITH A SUMMARY OF THE COMMITTEE'S VIEWS. HABIB

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